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Schools reopen with masks optional in many U.S. classrooms

By JEFF AMY

Associated Press

MCDONOUGH, Ga. (AP)

— As Tussahaw Elementary opened this week for a new school year, teary-eyed mothers led in kindergartners dwarfed by backpacks and buses dropped off fifth graders looking forward to ruling their school. The biggest clue to the lingering COVID-19 crisis was the masks worn by students and teachers — but not all of them.

Georgia, like most states, is leaving it up to local schools to decide whether to require face coverings. And 43,000-student Henry County, like many districts worn out by months of conflict over masks, has decided not to insist on them.

Instead, they are "highly

recommended."

Many parents Wednesday in this suburb south of Atlanta had mixed feelings about the policy. Some kept their children home in disagreement with it. Others sent their youngsters to class with face coverings. Shatavia Dorsey, the mother of a kindergartner and a fifth grader, said her children are going to wear their masks at school regardless of the rules.

"They're not vaccinated because they're too young, and I don't know if someone else is carrying it in," said Dorsey, who is doubtful about the school system's ability to maintain in-person instruction amid rising infections.

Continued on next page



Students walk down the hallway at Tussahaw Elementary school on Wednesday, Aug. 4, 2021, in McDonough, Ga. Schools have begun reopening in the U.S. with most states leaving it up to local schools to decide whether to require masks.

Associated Press

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Henry County Board of Education Chair Holly Cobb, left, talks to students at Tussahaw Elementary school on Wednesday, Aug. 4, 2021, in McDonough, Ga.

Associated Press

Continued from Front

With the delta variant spreading rapidly, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Academy of Pediatrics have advised in recent weeks that everyone in schools wear masks in communities with substantial or high transmission.

Educators have had to contend with strong resistance to masks from some parents and political leaders. Some consider mask rules an intrusion on parents' authority to make decisions about their children's health.

California, Louisiana, New Jersey, Oregon and Washington state intend to require masks for all students and teachers regardless of vaccination status. At the other end of the spectrum, Arkansas, Arizona, Florida, Iowa, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas and Utah have banned mask require-

ments in public schools. Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis of Florida said Thursday the decision of whether to wear masks in school should be made by parents, adding: "What are the harmful effects of putting a kindergartener in a mask for seven hours? Have they talked about the emotional, the academic, the physiological? Why isn't CDC studying that?"

Outbreaks that have hit schools at the very start of the year have added to calls for more mask requirements.

In Marion, Arkansas, over 800 students and staff members have been quarantined because of exposure since classes began last week in the 4,000-student district.

Marion Superintendent Glen Fenter urged lawmakers to overturn the state law banning masks, warning that a "full-blown crisis"

could lie ahead. And Republican Gov. Asa Hutchinson expressed regret over signing the ban in the first place and asked that it be lifted. But the GOP-controlled Legislature left it in place Friday.

Later in the day, an Arkansas judge blocked the state from enforcing the ban until further notice.

In yet another fight over the issue Friday, the Florida Board of Education applied pressure to discourage schools from making masks mandatory. The board said it will issue tuition vouchers so that parents who object to mask requirements can send their children to private school. The money would be taken out of public schools' funding.

From the beginning of the pandemic to the peak of infections in January, CDC data showed children 15 and under had the lowest infection rates. Now,

though, school-age children have infection rates higher than adults 50 and older.

Henry County recorded 111 cases of COVID-19 in children ages 5 to 17 in the two weeks ending July 28. Its per capita rate is one of the highest in Georgia and higher than the nationwide figure.

Henry County Superintendent Mary Elizabeth Davis said she believes schools have learned how to prevent transmission, citing intensified cleaning, air filtration and use of hand sanitizer. The district is also offering its 6,000 employees \$1,000 bonuses to get vaccinated.

"We are highly recommending that individuals opt for a mask as an added layer of prevention, but we also know so much more today than we did a year ago," Davis said, wearing an "I got vaccinated" sticker. "And what we know today is that schools are not catalysts for community spread."

At least 28 of Georgia's more than 180 school districts are requiring masks, encompassing more than 38% of the state's public school students.

At Tussahaw Elementary, more than 60% of students were wearing masks in four classrooms visited by a reporter Wednesday, though some had pulled them down. In only one room, where the teacher was also unmasked, were a majority of students without face coverings.

What parents at Tussahaw really wanted was some normalcy — an end to trying to help children at home learn virtually, or cycling between in-person school and quarantine.

"We weathered the storm, but it's a lot better being back in the classroom," Bryant Thigpen said after dropping off his son for the first day of fifth grade. He said he thinks the school system should require masks — "at least until the cases go down."

Daniel Denny sent both his children to Tussahaw with masks but said face coverings should be up to parents.

"To each his own," he said. "You take care of your household how you choose."

Kimberly Vining, a parent of two middle school students, strongly approved of the policy, saying it will make things much easier for children with asthma or anxiety about wearing masks.

"I have faith in God and I'm not going to live in fear for a virus that has a 98% survival rate," she said.

Overall, 90% of Henry County students are back in person, while 10% are opting for all-virtual instruction or a combination of both.

Holley Freeman's 8-year-old daughter, Kalani, is one student who will be staying home and learning virtually. Freeman said that members of her household have health problems and that with no mask mandate, it would be unsafe for her daughter to go to school.

"I feel really upset that we didn't have a safe choice," Freeman said. "I feel really upset that our community betrayed us."

She said her daughter took the news hard: "She cried all the way home and cried all night and cried this morning, knowing she had to go online again." □



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Pause on student loan payments extended through January

By COLLIN BINKLEY

The Biden administration on Friday announced that federal student loan payments will remain suspended through January 2022, extending a pause that began at the start of the pandemic and was scheduled to expire next month. The Education Department said this will be the final extension.

Borrowers will not have to make payments on federal student loans during the moratorium, interest rates will be set at 0% and debt collection efforts will remain on pause. The suspension will expire on Jan. 31, 2022.

Education Secretary Miguel Cardona said it's meant to give borrowers enough time to prepare for their payments to resume.

"As our nation's economy continues to recover from a deep hole, this final extension will give students and borrowers the time they need to plan for restart and ensure a smooth pathway back to repayment," Cardona said in a statement.



Education Secretary Miguel Cardona speaks during the daily briefing at the White House in Washington, Thursday, Aug. 5, 2021.

Associated Press

The Trump administration suspended federal student loan payments in March 2020 and later extended them through January 2021. President Joe Biden, soon after taking office, extended the pause through Sept. 30. But even as the economy rebounds, there

have been concerns that borrowers would not be ready to continue payments so soon. Democrats, including Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, N.Y., and Sen. Elizabeth Warren, Mass., recently pressed Biden to extend the moratorium through at

least March 2022.

Schumer, Warren and Rep. Ayanna Pressley, D-Mass., applauded the extension in a joint statement Friday, saying it provides relief to millions of borrowers facing a "disastrous financial cliff." "The payment pause has saved the average borrow-

er hundreds of dollars per month, allowing them to invest in their futures and support their families' needs," the Democrats said.

The Education Department itself has raised concerns about the administrative hurdles around suddenly restarting loan payments. In a November 2020 report, the department said it would be a "heavy burden" for the government and loan servicers.

In its Friday announcement, the Education Department said the final extension provides enough time to restart payments smoothly.

The extension drew criticism from conservatives including Rep. Virginia Foxx, the top Republican on the House Education and Labor Committee.

"I regret that Secretary Cardona did not show real leadership by working with Congress to transition responsibly the portfolio back into repayment by Oct. 1 of this year," Foxx said in a statement. "It is nothing less than a dereliction of duty." □

Norwegian cruises challenges Florida passenger vaccine law

By CURT ANDERSON
AP Legal Affairs Writer

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — Norwegian Cruise Line asked a federal judge Friday to block a Florida law prohibiting cruise companies from demanding that passengers show written proof of coronavirus vaccination before they board a ship.

Norwegian contends the "vaccine passport" ban, signed into law in May by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis, jeopardizes the health and safety of passengers and crew and is an unconstitutional infringement on the First Amendment's free speech guarantee, among other things. Norwegian attorney Derek Shaffer told U.S. District Judge Kathleen Williams during a remote hearing the vaccination requirement for its passengers is especially needed as Florida has recently experienced a

sharp increase in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations. "It's scary what is happening in Florida. Florida is a hotspot," Shaffer said. "All we're doing is trying to protect our staff and passengers."

The lawsuit names state Surgeon General Scott Rivkees, who leads the Florida Department of Health. The state's attorney, Pete Patterson, said the law's aim is to prevent discrimination against passengers who don't get vaccinated.

"You can't discriminate against customers on the basis of their refusal to give you information," Patterson said. "If it weren't for this law, there would be a vaccine passport required to get on a cruise ship."

Williams did not immediately rule Friday on Norwegian's request for a temporary injunction halting the law's enforcement. Violations of the law could

trigger a penalty of \$5,000 per passenger, which Shaffer said would cause the company "irreparable harm." "This law should be fatal on arrival," Shaffer said, adding that the Legislature and governor sought mainly to "score political points" in the heated national debate over getting the coronavirus vaccine.

The hearing comes as the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals is considering the validity of cruise line rules adopted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The appeals court recently upheld a Tampa judge's decision, hailed by DeSantis, making those CDC rules on how to resume cruise sailing into guidelines rather than requirements.

Miami-based Norwegian operates 28 cruise ships around the world but only those boarding in Florida ports are affected by the



In this May 4, 2020 file photo, Norwegian cruise ships are docked at Portsmouth Marine Terminal in Portsmouth, Va.

Associated Press

state vaccine passport law. Once the ships leave Florida waters, the law no longer applies. Many cruise destinations, however, have their own vaccination requirements for passengers to go ashore. Norwegian is planning an Aug. 15 cruise from Florida under its vaccination proof policy. If the law banning that policy remains in effect, the company said that ship won't sail — and Norwegian has also threatened to abandon Florida

entirely over this issue. "Simply stated, (Norwegian) cannot sail as planned unless and until Florida's ban gives way," the company said in court documents. "There is no adequate substitute for documentary proof when it comes to maximizing onboard safety."

Other cruise lines, including Carnival and Royal Caribbean, have already begun voyages from Florida with a variety of policies regarding COVID-19 vaccination. □

Wildfire explodes to third-largest in California history

Associated Press

GREENVILLE, Calif. (AP) — A Northern California wildfire that is now the third-largest in state history had burned for weeks, mostly in remote wildland areas with few people, before it roared through the little mountain community of Greenville, driven by shifting winds and bone-dry vegetation.

Eva Gorman has called the town home for 17 years and said it was love at first sight when she and her husband bought the house where they raised their son.

"We walked up to the front of the house and said 'Oh wow, this is it,' she said, a place where her grandmother's dining room chairs and her aunt's bed from Italy fit just right. "You know when you run across something that fits like an old shoe or glove?" Now the town is in ashes after hot, dry, gusty weather drove the fire through the Gold Rush-era Sierra Nevada community of about 1,000. The blaze incinerated much of the downtown that included wooden buildings more than a century old. The winds were expected to calm and change direc-



Homes and cars destroyed by the Dixie Fire line central Greenville on Thursday, Aug. 5, 2021, in Plumas County, Calif.

Associated Press

tion heading into the weekend but that good news came too late for Gorman. She was told that her home burned down — but is waiting until she can see it with her own eyes to believe it's gone.

Before fleeing Greenville, Gorman said she managed to grab some photos off the wall, her favorite jewelry and important

documents. She is coming to terms with the reality that much of what was left behind may be irreplaceable. "There is a photo I keep visualizing in my mind of my son when he was 2, he's 37," she said. "And you think 'It's OK, I have the negatives. And then you think. 'Oh. No. I don't have the negatives.'" The Dixie Fire, named for the road where it started,

was still raging on Friday after growing overnight by 110 square miles (285 square kilometers), greater than the size of New York City.

"This is going to be a long firefight," Capt. Mitch Matlow, spokesperson of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, said.

The fire remained at 35%

contained Friday morning and now spans an area of 676 square miles (1,751 square kilometers). No injuries or deaths have been reported but the fire continued to threaten more than 10,000 homes.

Officials have not yet assessed the number of destroyed buildings, but Plumas County Sheriff Todd Johns estimated on Thursday that "well over" 100 homes burned in and near the town.

"My heart is crushed by what has occurred there," said Johns, a lifelong Greenville resident.

About a two-hour drive south, officials said some 100 homes and other buildings burned in the fast-moving River Fire that broke out Wednesday near Colfax, a town of about 2,000. There was no containment and about 6,000 people were ordered to evacuate in Placer and Nevada counties, state fire officials said.

The three-week-old Dixie Fire was one of 100 active, large fires burning in 14 states, most in the West where historic drought has left lands parched and ripe for ignition. □

Coast Guard: 6 dead in Alaska sightseeing plane crash



Ketchikan Volunteer Rescue Squad personnel land and disembark from a Hughes 369D helicopter on Thursday, Aug. 5, 2021, at Temco Helicopters Inc in Ketchikan, Alaska.

Associated Press

By **BECKY BOHRER and MARK THIESSEN**

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — A sightseeing plane crashed Thursday in southeast Alaska, killing all six people on board, the U.S. Coast

Guard said.

The plane's emergency alert beacon was activated around 11:20 a.m. when the plane crashed in the area of Misty Fjords National Monument, near Ketchi-

kan, the Coast Guard and Federal Aviation Administration said. A helicopter company reported seeing wreckage on a ridgeline in the search area, and Coast Guard crew members found the wreckage around 2:40 p.m. A Coast Guard helicopter lowered two rescue swimmers to the site, and they reported no survivors, the agency said. The identities of those killed in the crash were not immediately released. The Alaska State Troopers and volunteers from the Ketchikan Volunteer Rescue Squad will coordinate recovery efforts Thursday and Friday.

The plane involved Thursday, a de Havilland Beaver, was owned by Southeast Aviation LLC.

"Our hearts are shattered at the loss of six people

today. We are thinking of and grieving with the families of the five passengers and our dear friend and pilot aboard the aircraft," the company said in a statement. "We are cooperating with the first responders and agencies involved, including the U.S. Coast Guard, National Transportation Safety Board and Alaska State Troopers."

The five passengers on the flight were from the Holland America Line cruise ship Nieuw Amsterdam, the company said in a statement. The ship stopped in Ketchikan on Thursday and delayed its afternoon departure after the plane crash. The company said it was making counseling services available to guests and crew.

"The float plane excursion was offered by an indepen-

dent tour operator and not sold by Holland America Line," the statement said.

Ketchikan is a popular stop for cruise ships visiting Alaska, and cruise ship passengers can take various sightseeing excursions while in port.

Popular among them are small plane flights to Misty Fjords National Monument, where visitors can see glacier valleys, snow-capped peaks and lakes in the wilderness area.

In 2019, two sightseeing planes collided in midair, killing six of the 16 people on board the two planes. Southeast Aviation on its website says it provides sightseeing tours to Misty Fjords National Monument and bear-viewing sites, along with air charters to other communities in southeast Alaska. □

Hiroshima marks 76th anniversary of US atomic bombing

By MARI YAMAGUCHI

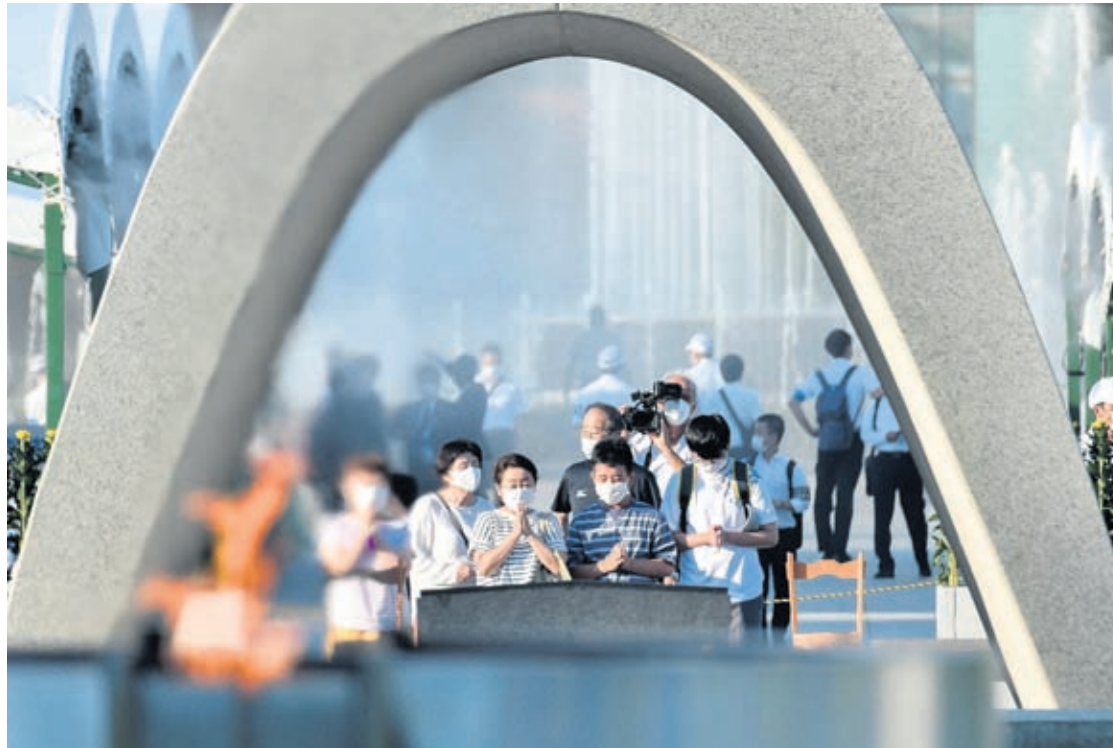
TOKYO (AP) — Hiroshima on Friday marked the 76th anniversary of the world's first atomic bombing, as the mayor of the Japanese city urged global leaders to unite to eliminate nuclear weapons just as they are united against the coronavirus.

Mayor Kazumi Matsui urged world leaders to commit to nuclear disarmament as seriously as they tackle a pandemic that the international community recognizes as "threat to humanity." "Nuclear weapons, developed to win wars, are a threat of total annihilation that we can certainly end, if all nations work together," Matsui said.

The United States dropped the world's first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945, destroying the city and killing 140,000 people. It dropped a second bomb three days later on Nagasaki, killing another 70,000. Japan surrendered on Aug. 15, ending World War II and Japan's nearly half-century of aggression in Asia.

Countries stockpiled nuclear weapons during the Cold War and a standoff continues to this day.

Matsui renewed his demand that Japan's government immediately sign and ratify the Treaty on



Visitors pray in front of the cenotaph dedicated to the victims of the atomic bombing at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima, western Japan Friday, Aug. 6, 2021. Visitors pray in front of the cenotaph dedicated to the victims of the atomic bombing at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima, western Japan Friday, Aug. 6, 2021.

Associated Press

the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga did not mention the treaty in his speech at the Hiroshima Peace Park ceremony, where aging survivors, officials and some dignitaries observed a minute of silence for the 8:15 a.m. blast. At a news conference later, Suga said he has no intention of signing the treaty.

"The treaty lacks support not only from the nuclear

weapons states including the United States but also from many countries that do not possess nuclear arms," Suga said. "What's appropriate is to seek a passage to realistically promote nuclear disarmament."

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons took effect in January after years of civil effort joined by atomic bombing survivors, or hibakusha. But while more than 50 coun-

tries have ratified it, the treaty notably lacks the U.S. and other nuclear powers as well as Japan, which has relied on the U.S. nuclear umbrella for its defense since the war's end.

After the ceremony, Suga apologized for inadvertently skipping parts of his speech. The sections that were dropped included a pledge to pursue efforts toward achieving a nuclear-free world as head of the world's only country

to have suffered atomic attacks, according to his speech posted on the Prime Minister's Office website.

Some said Suga skipping those parts of his speech spotlighted what could be seen as government hypocrisy over nuclear disarmament and the treatment of atomic bomb survivors.

"The important point is that his heart simply wasn't there," former Hiroshima Mayor Tadatashi Akiba said on an online news conference later Friday.

Akiba has proposed a moment of silence by Olympic athletes and participants to mark the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings, urging the International Olympic Committee to take action and not just talk about world peace.

Although a moment of silence didn't occur at the Olympics on Friday, there will be "a moment of remembrance" at Sunday's closing ceremony for all lives lost, including those in Hiroshima, organizing committee spokesman Masa Takaya said.

Many survivors of the bombings have lasting injuries and illnesses resulting from the explosions and radiation exposure and face discrimination in Japanese society. □

At least 10 passengers injured in stabbings on Tokyo train

By MARI YAMAGUCHI

Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — A man with a knife stabbed at least 10 passengers on a commuter train in Tokyo on Friday and was captured by police after fleeing, fire department officials and news reports said.

NHK public television said one passenger was seriously injured. It said the suspect left his knife behind as he fled and later gave himself up at a convenience store. The Japanese capital is currently hosting the Olympics, which end Sunday.

The Tokyo Fire Department said nine of the 10 injured passengers were taken to nearby hospitals, while the tenth was able to walk

away. All of those injured were conscious, fire department officials said.

A witness at a nearby station where the train stopped said passengers were rushing out of the carriages and shouting that there was a stabbing and asking for first aid. Another witness told NHK that he saw passengers smeared with blood come out of the train, as an announcer asked for doctors and for passengers carrying towels. Dozens of paramedics and police arrived at the station, one of the witnesses said.

NHK said the suspect later walked into a convenience store and identified himself as the suspect on the news

and said he was tired of running away. The store manager called police after seeing blood stains on the man's shirt. Police were questioning the man as they prepared his arrest, NHK said.

The stabbing occurred near Seijogakuen station, according to railway operator Odakyu Electric Railway Co.

Police declined to comment and no other details were immediately available.

While shooting deaths are rare in Japan, the country has had a series of high-profile killings with knives in recent years.

In 2019, a man carrying two knives attacked a group of



Rescuers prepare stretchers at Soshigaya Okura Station after stabbing on a commuter train, in Tokyo Friday, Aug. 6, 2021.

Associated Press

schoolgirls waiting at a bus stop just outside Tokyo, killing two people and injuring 17 before killing himself. In 2018, a man killed a passenger and injuring two

others in a knife attack on a bullet train. In 2016, a former employee at a home for the disabled allegedly killed 19 people and injured more than 20. □

Hezbollah, Israel trade fire in dangerous Mideast escalation

By LAURIE KELLMAN and ZE-
 INA KARAM

Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — The militant Hezbollah group fired a barrage of rockets toward Israel on Friday, and Israel hit back with artillery in a significant escalation between the two sides.

It was the third day of attacks along the volatile border with Lebanon, a major Middle East flashpoint where tensions between Israel and Iran, which backs Hezbollah, occasionally play out. But comments by Israeli officials and Hezbollah's actions suggested the two were seeking to avoid a major conflict at this time. Israel said it fired back after 19 rockets were launched from Lebanon, and Prime Minister Naftali Bennett swiftly convened a meeting with the country's top defense officials. No casualties were reported.

"We do not wish to escalate to a full war, yet of course we are very prepared for that," said Lt. Col. Amnon Shefler, spokesman for the Israel Defense Forces.

Israel has long considered Hezbollah, which is based in Lebanon, its most seri-



Israeli forces fire artillery from their position on the border with Lebanon after a barrage of rockets were fired from Lebanon, Friday, Aug. 6, 2021.

Associated Press

ous and immediate military threat. Friday's exchanges came a day after Israel's defense minister warned that his country is prepared to strike Iran following a fatal drone strike on a oil tanker at sea that his country blamed on Tehran.

The tensions come at a politically sensitive time in Israel, where a new eight-

party governing coalition is already trying to keep the peace on another border under a fragile cease-fire that ended an 11-day war with Hamas' militant rulers in Gaza. Sirens blared across the Golan Heights and Upper Galilee near the Lebanon border Friday morning. Hezbollah said in a statement that it hit

"open fields" in the disputed Shebaa farms area.

The group said it fired 10 rockets, calling it retaliation for Israeli airstrikes the day before. Israel said those strikes were in response to rocket fire from southern Lebanon in recent days that was not claimed by any group.

Shebaa Farms is an en-

clave where the borders of Israel, Lebanon and Syria meet. Israel says it is part of the Golan Heights, which it captured from Syria in 1967. Lebanon and Syria say Shebaa Farms belong to Lebanon, while the United Nations says the area is part of Syria.

"This is a very serious situation and we urge all parties to cease fire," the force known as UNIFIL said. Force commander, Gen. Stefano Del Col, said the force was coordinating with the Lebanese army to strengthen security measures in the area.

Hezbollah's decision to strike open fields in a disputed area rather than Israel proper, appeared calibrated to limit any response.

Shefler, the Israeli military spokesman, told reporters Friday that three of the 19 rockets fired fell within Lebanese territory. Ten were intercepted by the defense system known as the Iron Dome.

Israel estimates Hezbollah possesses over 130,000 rockets and missiles capable of striking anywhere in the country. □

Belarus moves to stop Lithuania from sending back migrants

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Belarus' border protection agency said Friday that it tightened control along its border with Lithuania to prevent Lithuanian authorities from sending migrants back to Belarus.

Lithuania, a member of the European Union, has faced an influx of mostly Iraqi migrants in the past few months. It accused the government of Belarus' authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko of encouraging the migrant flow in retaliation for the EU sanctions against his country following the diversion of a passenger plane to arrest a dissident journalist aboard.

Meanwhile, another EU member, Poland, also said it was seeing a rising number of Iraqi and Afghan migrants trying to enter from Belarus, in what a govern-

ment official calls an element in a "hybrid war."

In an emotional Facebook post, Lithuanian parliament's human rights ombudsman Vytautas Valentinavicius described Lithuanian border police blocking dozens of migrants from crossing into the country and urging them to get back to Belarus early Friday while the Belarusian border guards fired warning shots into the air to deter them in a tense standoff. As the situation escalates, Lukashenko ordered defense and security agencies on Thursday to "close every meter of the border" to keep out immigrants Lithuania sends back into Belarus.

Belarus state TV posted an image of Belarusian border guards standing in a line to close the border while a migrant with a child sits at their feet.

"The border guards used all necessary means to prevent the unlawful crossing of the border in view of the current situation under which the Lithuanian side is taking foreign citizens seeking refuge in the EU to the border," the Belarus State Border Committee said in Friday's statement.

It said it created mobile tactical groups to patrol the entire length of the border to prevent Lithuania from sending migrants back into Belarus.

Authorities in Belarus this week alleged that Iraqi immigrants forcibly expelled from Lithuania and sent back to Belarus had injuries, including dog bites, and had to be hospitalized. Belarus also claimed Wednesday that a "non-Slavic" person died from injuries at a border town but Lithuania dismissed the report as



Migrants stand behind a fence inside the newly built refugee camp in the Rudninkai military training ground, some 38km (23.6 miles) south from Vilnius, Lithuania, Wednesday, Aug. 4, 2021.

Associated Press

propaganda from a hostile regime.

Lithuania, a nation of less than 3 million people, has no physical barriers on its 679-kilometer (420-mile) long border with Belarus. More than 4,100 migrants, most of them from Iraq,

have crossed this year from Belarus into Lithuania.

The prime ministers of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania issued a joint statement Friday, expressing their grave concern about the "ongoing hybrid attack" by Lukashenko's government. □

Data raises concerns as Brazil's forest fire season begins

Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) —

Severe drought and early data are raising concerns that this forest fire season in Brazil will see the same high levels of destruction recorded in the past two years, despite efforts to tamp down the blazes.

With Brazil's forest fire season underway, the government space agency that uses satellites to monitor fires reported more area burned in the month of July than in any July since 2016, according to data released Thursday. The same was true for June.

Most Brazilian blazes are manmade, often started illegally by land-grabbers clearing forest for cattle or crops. Fires tend to begin increasing in June and peak in September, according to historical data. They can easily get out of control during the dry season, burning large swaths of forest to the ground.

Brazil is home to the world's largest rainforest and tropical wetlands the Amazon and Pantanal which saw dramatic fires in 2019 and 2020, respectively, that caused the greatest annual forest loss since 2015. That drew global criticism of the response from the administration of President Jair Bolsonaro, who has repeatedly called for development of the region.

This year, it's the Cerrado savanna stretching across Brazil's center-west region that is suffering more than usual. An area almost as big as Connecticut and New Jersey burned there in the first seven months of 2021.

Ane Alencar, science director at the Amazon Environmental Research Institute, said in a July 27 online panel that there have been fewer Amazon fires this year due to cool weather, which limits fire's potential to spread. But deforestation remains on par with the last two years, so much dry material remains on the ground waiting to be burned, she added.

"I am afraid about the coming months," said Alencar, who is also coordinator



In this Aug. 23, 2020 file photo, fire consumes land recently deforested by cattle farmers near Novo Progresso, Para state, Brazil.

of MapBiomas Fogo, which compiles data on deforestation and fires across the region. "When this cold front goes away, the vegetation will be drier and then we will have warmer temperatures. I'm not sure that the people who cut down the forest will not light it." Citing heightened hazard due to Brazil's worst drought in nine decades, the Justice and Environment ministries on July 22 announced a task force to prevent and investigate fires in 11 states of the Amazon, Pantanal and Cerrado biomes. Some 6,000 people, including federal and state police and firefighters, as well as state public security and environmental officials will participate in the effort, according to a statement.

On June 29, Bolsonaro decreed redeployment of soldiers to the Amazon to combat fires and deforestation, and also issued a 120-day ban on unauthorized outdoor fires.

Similar measures in previous years didn't prevent illegal fires, however. More than 90% of the Pantanal hot spots detected in 2020 came after a similar presidential ban, according to Vinicius Silgueiro, coordinator of territorial intelligence at the Center of Life Institute in Mato Grosso state.

"The sense of impunity is

very high. Enforcement is well below what is necessary," Silgueiro said.

In Mato Grosso state, half of whose territory is in the Amazon, the federal and state governments last year began coordinating actions to put an end to overlap that frequently left other areas unmanned and vulnerable, according to Mauren Lazzaretti, the state's environment secretary.

The state is also purchasing a helicopter and plans to deploy dozens of planes loaned by Pantanal farmers and businesses to drop fire retardant onto blazes. Last year, over 4 million hectares (about 15,000 square miles) of the Pantanal went up in flames, or about 27% its area by far the most since official record-keeping began in 2003. While the biome regenerates quickly, unlike rainforest, fires often kill local wildlife, such as jaguars, caimans and giant otters.

"The size of the fires last year drew society's attention to the component of individual responsibility," Lazzaretti said. "The engagement of cities, farmers and even traditional and Indigenous communities is much greater this year."

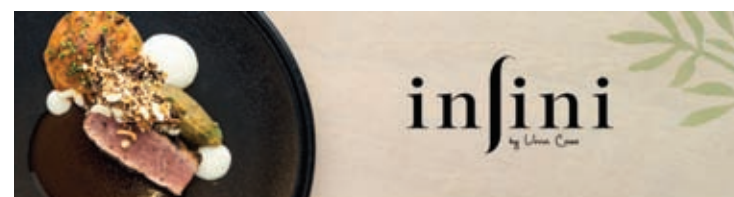
The year before, fires in the Amazon roused global concern, and several European governments openly criticized Bolsonaro's ad-

ministration. Bolsonaro countered that fires nationwide and in the Amazon, while up from 2018, were roughly in line with the average of the preceding several years and were down sharply from 15 years earlier. He called on European leaders to mind their own backyards.

Earlier studies showed the Amazon absorbs about 2 billion of the 40 billion tons of carbon dioxide the world emits into the atmosphere each year, making it an important part of the global effort to curb climate change. But a study led by the Brazil's Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, published in Nature on July 14 spanning 10 years and involving nearly 600 flyovers found the dry season's intensification and increased deforestation had caused more fires and higher carbon emissions. The southeastern part of the Amazon, particularly ravaged by logging, has become a net source of carbon.

Paulo Artaxo, professor of environmental physics at the University of Sao Paulo and a member of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change, said other recent studies have shown even the more preserved western Amazon region is now carbon neutral in terms of emissions, while a few years ago, it was a carbon sink. □

Associated Press



Taste limitless possibilities at Infini, where Chef Urvin Croes and his team explores without boundaries and steps with both feet outside of the box to create his most sensational dishes yet. This meticulously designed restaurant located inside Blue Residences on scenic Eagle Beach is a chef's table concept with limited seating where diners are able to interact with the staff and other guests alike throughout the evening.

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Reintroduction of COVID-19 measures as of on August 7, 2021

ORANJESTAD –The Prime Minister of Aruba, Mrs. Evelyn Wever-Croes announced the reintroduction of COVID-19 measures due to the increasing COVID-19 cases in Aruba.

As of Friday, August 6, there were 754 active COVID-19 cases. Therefore the rein-

roduction of these measures is necessary. The measures are:

- The use of masks is again mandatory in all establishments;
- closing time for businesses will now be 12.00 midnight to 06.00 am;
- the area ban is valid from 12:00 midnight to

- 6.00 am in all public areas, such as parking lots and beaches;
- drinking alcohol in public places like on the beach or in a parking lot is prohibited.

For updated travel requirements go to www.aruba.com. □



Honoring of a distinguished visitor at Casa del Mar Beach Resort



EAGLE BEACH — Recently, Kimberley Richardson of the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure to honor Aruba's loyal and friendly visitors as Distinguished Visitors of Aruba. The symbolic Distinguished Visitor certificate is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, as a token of appreciation to the guests who visit Aruba 10 years and more consecutively.

The honorees were **Ms. Lilyana Egan** traveling together with her Grandmother **Mrs. Ethel Hoegen** from USA! Family members were also present to witness this honorable honoring.

This lovely family stated that they love the island very much, especially for its year-round sunny weather, nice sandy beaches, swimming with friends, and Aruba's warm and friendly people whom have become like family to her.

Richardson together with the representatives of the Casa Del Mar Beach Resort presented the certificates to the honorees, handed over some presents and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination and as their home-away from-home. □

Prohibited by law: Tourist leaving the island with seashells, white sand and corals



ORANJESTAD — For the last months the customs department at the airport intercepted many tourists leaving the island with seashells, white sand and corals as souvenirs.

Conform the international treaty of CITES and our local law which protects our Flora & Fauna, it is completely prohibited to take any seashell, sand and coral outside of Aruba, this in order to protect our environment. The high amount of seashell, sand and corals confiscated is very strange and it is suspected that our own locals are the once selling these to the tourists, which is unacceptable.

Upon confiscation at the airport the tourist also faces a fine that they have to pay before leaving. This is surely not a pleasant experience for the tourist. This also leads to a negative reaction which can put our tourism in a negative light.

Let's all give nature the respect it deserves by protecting our environment. Stop collecting seashells, white sand and corals from our shores and stop selling these to our tourist. We want our future generations and visitors to enjoy the beauty of our beaches, shells and corals. Let's all protect what is ours! □

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Explore Aruba



ORANJESTAD — Aruba Today collected some things to do BEYOND the beach. Yes, we know. Aruba, located 15 miles north of Venezuela in the warm waters of the southern Caribbean, is home to beautiful white-sand beaches, 82-degree days, and thus ideal for the perfect beach day. But we are also blessed with some of the warmest people in the world and our island is 19.6 miles long and 6 miles across, with a total area of 70 square miles. Bit more to discover than the white stretch on the coastline we say. Let's mention some of these hidden gems.

Arikok National Park

The Arikok National park is worth the ride. We love the

hikes that are guided by the park's rangers whose job is to maintain trails and protect natural resources. The flora and fauna are beautiful and the historical sites tell you about the island's indigenous roots. The guided tours are even free of charge. If you are not up to walking, you can drive through the park, one way or another this park is a great place to spend an entire day. Cruising through the landscape you end up at some of the most stunning beaches like Dos Playa or Daimara Beach. In Total the park consists of 7907 acres protected nature with a richness of animals living in it. The Aruban whip-tail lizard (cododo), Aruban cat eye snake (santanero)

and endangered rattle snake (cascabel) are just some of them, you can also admire these close in the park's Visitors' Center. For more information, visit the website www.arubanationalpark.org

Natural Bridge

One of Aruba's favorite tourist attractions is the Natural Bridge. For thousands of years, pounding waves and strong winds have slowly chiseled away the limestone cliffs along Aruba's north coast to create several natural bridges. The largest of these bridges used to be the famous Natural Bridge. The bridge was a formation of coral limestone cut out by years of pounding surf, and was



one of the largest of these types of spans in the world. It stood some 23 feet (7 meters) above sea level and spans more than 100 feet (30 meters). Unfortunately the bridge collapsed on September 2, 2005. Despite this, it is still the most photographed natural bridge and it remains a popular tourist attraction in Aruba, with the adjacent and intact Baby Bridge also meriting a visit. The Natural Bridge is the perfect stop while touring Aruba. There is no admission fee or set hours for visiting. Quench your thirst with refreshing beverages & refuel your tank with local snacks.

The Lourdes Grotto

Named in commemoration

of the famous French religious landmark, was created under the guidance of a priest named "Erkamp" and parishioners in the year 1958. The grotto, a shrine built into the rocks is located in Seroe Preto, just off the main road to San Nicolas. A statue of the Virgin Mary, weighing 700 kilos, was hoisted into place in the grotto. Every year, on February 11 (feast of Lady of Lourdes), a procession leaves from the St. Theresa church in San Nicolas to the grotto, where a mass is performed. The grotto is located road-side and can be visited daily. Just make sure you park safely in the event you wish to stop for pictures at this location. □





ORANJESTAD — It was the official Grand Opening of Harbour House Aruba last Thursday, June 10th. The residence consisting of 94 units is located in the former Mar Azul building, right in the heart of Oranjestad. The two brothers Irwin J. Perret-Gentil and Alberto Perret-Gentil from PERING, one of the largest, privately-owned Real Estate and construction firms in Venezuela and Aruba, officially opened their new jewel in the presence of the invitees.

Harbour House Aruba is the ultimate smart investment or personal living space. A state-of-the-art lobby, an ocean-view gym, bar service, rooftop with 360 degrees view of Oranjestad, on-site parking, 24-hours security and a top floor lounge area with Jacuzzi's. Cherry on the cake: an infinity pool with a panorama on the harbour.

Harbour House Aruba offers cosmopolitan living in a beach-chic environment. The residence is fast-selling their studios, two-bedroom and three-bedroom units for many reasons but in a nutshell we can name: great location, great value for your money and great quality. To see exactly what still is available you may check the website which shows you a map with sold

Harbour House Aruba officially open! 80 % sold, construction in final phase: Harbour House Aruba is ready for you!



and open units. Updates on construction are also on forehand. When you live abroad stopping by to check upon your purchase is not that simple, yet with the monthly updates on their website, it is a lot easier.

Hottest condo in town

Aruba Today talked to one of the owners from New York: "This is going to be the hottest condo building on the island because this is the very first thing people see when they arrive here by cruise ship and it is the only one combining the ocean, port and city. We feel so happy to be the owner here, also, the organization is amazing. We are being accommodated in every way, the attention you get is extraor-

dinary."

Boardwalk

Living here includes being part of Oranjestad and all its benefits. Around the Harbour House building a boardwalk is constructed allowing you to stroll along the waterfront and enjoy a drink on a terrace or dive into the art gallery, souvenir store or even have dinner facing the atmospheric harbour of Oranjestad.

The process of purchase is easy, whether you are abroad or on the island. Make an appointment through the website to visit the sales office when you are here. In that way you can actually see the unit, materials and amenities. If you are not on the island the website can help you out and the sales office is happy to send you all needed documentation for you to orientate. When agreed upon the unit you sign an agreement and move forward with the down payment which is \$ 50.000. At receipt of that amount the sales is closed and the price will not change. You know what you get and will not be surprised by price changes. The payment agreements after the deposit will be discussed and are flexible. Harbour House Aruba assist also in financing by banks.

For more information: <https://harbour-housearuba.com>.



As Americans pay more for rent, landlords get some relief

By ALEX VEIGA

AP Business Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) —

Americans are paying more to live in apartments, as demand for housing increases and many would-be homebuyers are forced to rent because prices for houses have gotten too steep.

It's a boon for owners of big apartment communities more than a year after the economy fell into a recession that left millions of Americans unemployed and struggling to pay rent. Zillow, which tracks housing data, says its rent index rose 7.1% in June, the biggest year-over-year increase going back to 2015.

Government efforts to support Americans hurt financially by COVID, including relief payments, have almost certainly helped tenants keep up with their rent. At least one measure of rent collections shows fewer tenants are failing to keep up with payments than just a few months ago. And while apartment vacancies haven't fallen back to pre-pandemic levels, they're basically in line with the 10-year average. Rising apartment rents represent a shift from earlier this year, when they weren't growing and vacancies kept rising. That changed in the spring when pandemic-related restrictions were loosened following a ramped-up distribution



This March 21, 2021 photo shows a leasing sign is displayed outside of residential building in Des Plaines, Ill.

of coronavirus vaccines. Since then, an improving economy and job market have helped stoke demand for rental housing.

"The tide has really turned quite a bit for (apartment) rentals because of these factors," said Victor Calanog, chief economist at Moody's Analytics REIS.

The national average effective rent, a key industry measure, increased by 0.6% in the second quarter, according to data from Moody's Analytics REIS, which tracks owners of communities with at least 50 apartments. The April-June increase snapped a string of four straight quar-

terly declines, lifting the average U.S. effective rent to \$1,394.79. It was also the biggest since the third quarter of 2019. Effective rent is what's left after taking out concessions offered sometimes by landlords to woo tenants.

Figures from Zillow, which tracks a wide swath of rental properties, including those owned by individual investors, show typical rents rose to \$1,799 in June.

Freddie Mac projects U.S. apartment rents will rise 2.5% this year, while the vacancy rate slips to 5%. The forecast is based on the assumption that growth in the economy will continue

through the rest of the year and into 2022.

With demand picking up, landlords are feeling less pressure to offer tenants incentives such as a free month's rent, Calanog said. "You could have gotten that six months ago, but no more," he said.

In another sign of improving trends for apartment owners, fewer tenants have been failing to pay their rent than just a few months ago, according to data from the National Multifamily Housing Council, an apartment industry group. The data, which is drawn from rent payments on more than 11 million apart-

ments, show that the percentage of apartments where rent was paid by months' end inched up to 95.6% in June after falling the two previous months. In June last year, the rent collection rate was 95.9%, then fell gradually until it hit a pandemic-low 93.2% in January.

One metric that hasn't improved is the national vacancy rate for apartments. It stayed at 5.3% this year, according to Moody's Analytics REIS.

In 2020, it went from 4.8% in the first quarter to 5.2% in the fourth quarter.

Efforts by federal, state and local authorities to help renters who would otherwise be evicted for missing rent payments have likely helped keep vacancy rates from climbing higher.

A federal moratorium on evictions expired at the end of July, setting the stage for mass evictions at a time when an ultra-contagious mutation of the COVID-19 virus is spreading across the U.S. But late Tuesday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a new ban on evictions through October 3 in counties with high levels of coronavirus transmissions.

"You can't rule out the very real possibility that vacancies have been stable because of eviction moratoria," Calanog said. "Is it the fake kind of stable?" □

Energy companies welcome latest ruling in erosion lawsuits

NEW ORLEANS (AP) —

Oil companies fighting dozens of lawsuits that blame drilling for decades of coastal erosion and wetland loss in Louisiana are pleased with a new appeals court ruling that could lead to some of the cases being heard in federal court.

The oil companies want all 42 lawsuits brought by six coastal parishes to be tried in federal court, a request that federal district judges had rejected.

On Thursday, however, the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said the judges should reexamine whether cases from two parishes that in-



In this June 3, 2011 file photo, Cypress trees that formerly stood on land are seen from the air near the rapidly receding shoreline of Lake Salvador in Jefferson Parish, just outside New Orleans.

Associated Press

involved federally overseen oil and gas operations during World War II should be heard in federal court.

Melissa Landry, spokesperson for legal teams representing BP America Production Company, Chevron, ConocoPhillips, Exxon Mobil Corporation and Shell, said in an email late Thursday that the teams welcome the new ruling.

While the parishes say the oil companies should be held responsible for wetlands loss, the companies say the suits are meritless. "The activities at issue were legally conducted and actively encouraged at every

level of government, and they delivered tremendous economic benefits to federal, state and local governments and communities," Landry said. A lead lawyer handling the lawsuits said Thursday that the ruling was, in his view, a victory for the parishes. John Carmouche said the decision effectively means that at least 15 of the 42 lawsuits those that don't deal with World War II-era operations will still be heard in state court. And, he said, the remainder could also be tried in state court, depending on the results of the newly ordered review. □

CROSSWORD

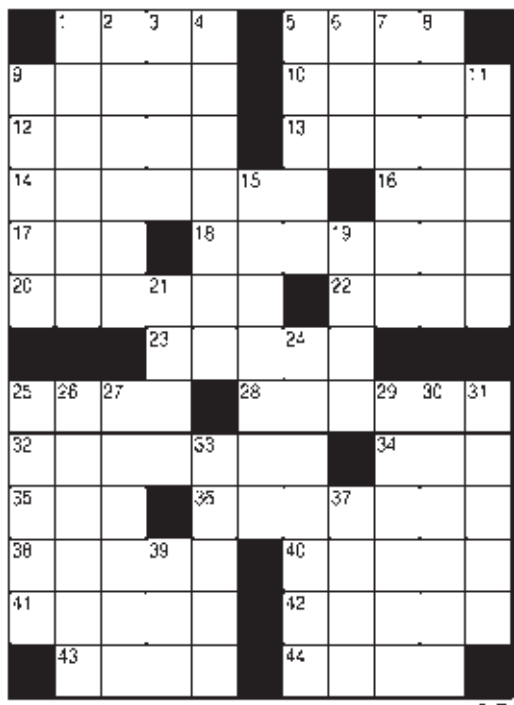
By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 43 Bar bills
1 Pump, 44 Pouchlike
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5 Obsessed
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9 Squall 1 Tried hard
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school view 19 Worked symbol
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18 Approval 6 That 21 Billionth: suds
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lyricist 7 In awe 24 Atlantic 33 Wrinkly
22 Track 8 Decapitate resort fruits
figures 9 Katey of 25 Visibly 37 Zhivago's
23 Pueblo "Sons of shocked love
material Anarchy" 26 Bit of time 39 Massage

25 Prayer
finish
28 Low
points
32 Decline
34 OSS
successor
35 Band
blaster
36 Cooperate
38 Strand
unit
40 Parson's
house
41 Boredom
42 Spring
sign



A X Y D L B A A X R
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

8-7

CRYPTOQUOTE

E S M ' L F S D D A C Y S R L

U C N I R D V : A S R S M I A B C P V

I S Y V D N O B L S M J V . — E D V F

B S R Z L S M

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: IT IS CERTAIN, IN ANY CASE, THAT IGNORANCE, ALLIED WITH POWER, IS THE MOST FEROCIOUS ENEMY JUSTICE CAN HAVE. — JAMES BALDWIN

SELF MILL
AVAIL AMOUR
LEDGE ZORRO
ANY AMENDED
DEMANDS VIE
DARES BONO
RED PAL
RAMS CANDID
ERA CINDERS
GALAHAD MAT
IMAGE ALONE
SIDES SERGE
SEES STEP

Yesterday's answer

3 Words of 11 Smooths, 27 Sevilla's
approxi- in a way nation
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4 Came into home as a
view 19 Worked symbol
5 Hilo hello the garden 30 Frees of
6 That 21 Billionth: suds
fellow Prefix 31 Wise ones
7 In awe 24 Atlantic 33 Wrinkly
8 Decapitate resort fruits
9 Katey of 25 Visibly 37 Zhivago's
"Sons of shocked love
Anarchy" 26 Bit of time 39 Massage



This May 21, 2021 photo shows the Apple logo displayed on a Mac Pro desktop computer in New York.

Associated Press

Apple to scan U.S. iPhones for images of child sexual abuse

AP Technology Writers

Apple unveiled plans to scan U.S. iPhones for images of child sexual abuse, drawing applause from child protection groups but raising concern among some security researchers that the system could be misused, including by governments looking to surveil their citizens.

The tool designed to detect known images of child sexual abuse, called "neuralMatch," will scan images before they are uploaded to iCloud. If it finds a match, the image will be reviewed by a human. If child pornography is confirmed, the user's account will be disabled and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children notified.

Separately, Apple plans to scan users' encrypted messages for sexually explicit content as a child safety measure, which also alarmed privacy advocates.

The detection system will only flag images that are already in the center's database of known child pornography. Parents snapping innocent photos of a child in the bath presumably need not worry. But researchers say the matching tool which doesn't "see" such images, just mathe-

matical "fingerprints" that represent them could be put to more nefarious purposes.

Matthew Green, a top cryptography researcher at Johns Hopkins University, warned that the system could be used to frame innocent people by sending them seemingly innocuous images designed to trigger matches for child pornography. That could fool Apple's algorithm and alert law enforcement. "Researchers have been able to do this pretty easily," he said of the ability to trick such systems.

Other abuses could include government surveillance of dissidents or protesters. "What happens when the Chinese government says, 'Here is a list of files that we want you to scan for,'" Green asked. "Does Apple say no? I hope they say no, but their technology won't say no."

Tech companies including Microsoft, Google, Facebook and others have for years been sharing digital fingerprints of known child sexual abuse images. Apple has used those to scan user files stored in its iCloud service, which is not as securely encrypted as its on-device data, for child pornography.

Apple has been under

government pressure for years to allow for increased surveillance of encrypted data. Coming up with the new security measures required Apple to perform a delicate balancing act between cracking down on the exploitation of children while keeping its high-profile commitment to protecting the privacy of its users. But a dejected Electronic Frontier Foundation, the online civil liberties pioneer, called Apple's compromise on privacy protections "a shocking about-face for users who have relied on the company's leadership in privacy and security."

Meanwhile, the computer scientist who more than a decade ago invented PhotoDNA, the technology used by law enforcement to identify child pornography online, acknowledged the potential for abuse of Apple's system but said it was far outweighed by the imperative of battling child sexual abuse.

"Is it possible? Of course. But is it something that I'm concerned about? No," said Hany Farid, a researcher at the University of California at Berkeley, who argues that plenty of other programs designed to secure devices from various threats haven't seen "this type of mission creep."

Want to pretend to live on Mars? For a whole year? Apply now

BY SETH BORENSTEIN

AP Science Writer

Want to find your inner Matt Damon and spend a year pretending you are isolated on Mars? NASA has a job for you.

To prepare for eventually sending astronauts to Mars, NASA began taking applications Friday for four people to live for a year in Mars Dune Alpha. That's a 1,700-square-foot Martian habitat, created by a 3D-printer, and inside a building at Johnson Space Center in Houston.

The paid volunteers will work a simulated Martian exploration mission complete with spacewalks, limited communications back home, restricted food and resources and equipment failures.

NASA is planning three of these experiments with the first one starting in the fall next year. Food will all be ready-to-eat space food and at the moment there are no windows planned. Some plants will be grown, but not potatoes like in the movie "The Martian." Damon played stranded astronaut Mark Watney, who survived on spuds.

"We want to understand how humans perform in them," said lead scientist Grace Douglas. "We are looking at Mars realistic situations."

The application process opened Friday and they're not seeking just anybody. The requirements are strict, including a master's degree in a science, engineering



This photo provided by ICON and NASA in August 2021 shows a proposal for the Mars Dune Alpha habitat on Mars.

Associated Press

or math field or pilot experience. Only American citizens or permanent U.S. residents are eligible. Applicants have to be between 30 and 55, in good physical health with no dietary issues and not prone to motion sickness.

That shows NASA is looking for people who are close to astronauts, said former Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield. And, he said, that's a good thing because it is a better experiment if the participants are more similar to the people who will really go to Mars. Past Russian efforts at a pretend Mars mission called Mars 500 didn't end well partly because the people were too much like everyday people, he said.

For the right person this could be great, said Hadfield, who spent five months

in orbit in 2013 at the International Space Station, where he played guitar and sang a cover video of David Bowie's "Space Oddity."

"Just think how much you're going to be able to catch up on Netflix," he said. "If they have a musical instrument there, you could go into there knowing nothing and come out a concert musician, if you want." There could be "incredible freedom" in a "year away from the demands of your normal life."

Attitude is key, said Hadfield, who has a novel "The Apollo Murders" coming out in the fall. He said the participants need to be like Damon's Watney character: "Super competent, resourceful and not relying on other people to feel comfortable."q

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Q&A: Barbra Streisand remixes her past for 'Release Me 2'

By GLENN GAMBOA

Associated Press

Barbra Streisand likes to get things just right.

As impressive as her award-winning superstar career as a singer and actress is, her success as a director and producer is groundbreaking. Until Chloe Zhao won best director at the Golden Globes this year for "Nomadland," Streisand was the only woman ever to win that award, a feat she accomplished in 1983 for "Yentl."

During the pandemic, Streisand, like so many of us, suddenly had some much-needed time to take on new projects — including her iPhone settings.

"My name was always coming up as 'Barbara with three As,'" she said. "You're supposed to be a smart-phone! How come you can't get my name right?" After famously calling Apple CEO Tim Cook to get Siri to pronounce her last name right — no Z sound — Streisand learned to override auto-correction with some advice from her assistant.

Tackling some previously unreleased songs from her past took a bit more work, but fans get to hear the results when her new album "Release Me 2" arrives Friday.

The Associated Press spoke with Streisand, 79, about her new album and life during the pandemic. The in-



Barbra Streisand presents the award for best musical at the Tony Awards in New York on June 12, 2016. Streisand's new album "Release Me 2" arrives Friday, Aug. 6.

Associated Press

terview was edited for clarity and length.

AP: "Be Aware" sounds like you wrote it last year. It sounds like advice for helping people through the pandemic.

Streisand: I was talking at that time (1971) about the Vietnam War. That's what I was thinking about. And hunger has always been a problem in the world. So many things are still a problem — homelessness for children. The world has changed a lot for the better, but a lot has remained the same. And it's amazing how when I was mixing this thinking how relevant it was

to today's world.

AP: Today's production technology improved "Once You've Been in Love," which you recorded in one take in the '70s.

Streisand: I wanted to sing it in the middle of an orchestra — feel that experience of being right there. Of course, they forgot to put baffles behind me so you couldn't edit it then. You couldn't raise one element of the orchestra. But now what's fun for me is it's like we're conducting the orchestra. When I was working on it with my engineer, Jochem van der Saag, on the iPad during COVID, it

was so much fun to have an engineer who could actually add congas or a marimba or whatever.

AP: I was surprised by the radio remix he did for the new single "Sweet Forgiveness."

Streisand: That's the one with the beat.

AP: Yes.

Streisand: What did you think of it?

AP: I liked it. I like the original better. It loses some of its drama by being more contemporary, but it works for radio now.

Streisand: Right. I have no idea about that kind of thing. I mean the record

company liked it or wanted me to do it, I guess. So I did it, but my favorite is the orchestration as it was.

AP: Do you like the idea of kind of trying something new and seeing how it turns out?

Streisand: Yeah. But you know, it's not my primary focus now. I've been doing this book — I started writing my journals in 1999 in long hand because I never learned how to type and now I wish I did.

AP: Did you spend most of the pandemic working on the book?

Streisand: I signed a book deal in 2014 and it was supposed to be done in two years. (Laughs.) I'm long overdue and my book is 824 pages at the moment and it's not finished. I'll look for any other reason than to write about my life. It's like "been there, done that." But during the pandemic I caught up a lot.

AP: What is your process like?

Streisand: I get up in the morning. My husband (James Brolin) and I may trade stocks and then I work on my book. Never had to dress up for anybody. It was kind of delicious to walk around my gardens and rearrange certain things. But basically, it was about writing the book.

AP: Are you ready to go back into the world now?

Streisand: Not really. I like the privacy. □

Meghan McCain makes low-key exit from 'The View'



This July 17, 2018 image released ABC shows Meghan McCain on the set of "The View," in New York. McCain made a low-key departure from "The View" after four years on Friday.

Associated Press

The Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Meghan McCain made a low-key departure from "The View" after four years on Friday, joking that she wanted to apologize to show producer Brian Teta "for making his blood pressure rise as much as I did."

Her mother, Cindy McCain, and Arizona Sen. Kyrsten Sinema appeared as guests for the farewell. McCain was hired to offer the conservative viewpoint on a talk show where she was outnumbered po-

litically, a role she took to with gusto. She frequently got into onscreen tiffs with co-hosts Joy Behar and Whoopi Goldberg.

Yet it was smooth sailing for her finale. McCain said at one point that "I feel like I died and this is a memorial." She perked up for a taped message from former House Speaker Paul Ryan, who said "the show will not be as lively without you." McCain hooted, "my boyfriend!"

McCain got married and had a baby daughter,

Liberty, during her time on "The View," and, with a regular return of the cast to its New York studio nearing, said she didn't want to commute from her Washington-area home.

Her mother said she's looking forward to seeing more of her, and her granddaughter. "I'm glad she chose a little bit of family over so much work at this time," Cindy McCain said. ABC has not said who will replace Meghan McCain in the show's "conservative" chair. □

Hall of Fame inductions roster is something to marvel at

AP Pro Football Writer

Take a look at this roster: Peyton Manning throwing to Calvin Johnson, Isaac Bruce, Harold Carmichael and Drew Pearson. Or handing off to Edgerrin James.

A pass protection pocket featuring Alan Faneca, Steve Hutchinson, Jimbo Covert and the late Winston Hill.

On defense, a secondary featuring Charles Woodson, Troy Polamalu, John Lynch, Steve Atwater and Donnie Shell.

All of them coached by Bill Cowher or Tom Flores or Jimmy Johnson.

The group of men entering the Pro Football Hall of Fame this weekend features everything. From a super scout who found the talent — the late Bill Nunn — to a defensive tackle who once punched out a horse: the late Alex Karras in his role as Mongo in "Blazing Saddles."

Quite a cast.

"I never knew I was going to wind up a pro football player," Manning told the Hall of Fame for its yearbook. "Like lots of kids, I had dreams and wanted to be like my dad, and my dad played football."

Archie Manning is in the College Football Hall of Fame and also had a lengthy NFL career.

"That was kind of an easy answer when people asked me or if I had to write on a class project," Peyton Manning said.

Nowadays, students write



In this Nov. 4, 2018 file photo, former Denver Broncos quarterback Peyton Manning talks prior to an NFL football game between the Denver Broncos and the Houston Texans in Denver.

Associated Press

such projects about Manning, the five-time NFL MVP and two-time Super Bowl winner. And about Calvin Johnson, the prolific wideout for the Lions who played only nine seasons but was so impressive he is joining Jim Brown and Gale Sayers as Pro Football Hall of Famers inducted at 35 years old or younger.

"That's football royalty, man," Johnson said. "When you hear those guys' names, you're just like, 'Wow.'"

This is a "Wow Weekend" in Canton. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 enshrinements of that year's class and a special centennial class were postponed to now. Combined with the 2021 group, 28 men are going into the hall.

There are so many inductees on Saturday and Sunday nights that the hall has limited speeches to eight minutes or less. Manning, well known for his verbosity, promises he will be under

that maximum.

"So, they're saying there's like a blinking light at six minutes," Manning said, "maybe a little bell going off at seven minutes, and then at eight minutes, they say that someone's going to come up and lead the applause to end the speech. I look forward to seeing them come up and lead the applause while Alan Faneca is still speaking. Good luck getting him off the stage. Or anybody

that's an offensive lineman is probably tough to pull."

Manning, Woodson and Calvin Johnson all were selected this year in their first time eligible. So was Polamalu in 2020; he has tested positive for the coronavirus and his status for attending Saturday is uncertain.

Lynch, on the other hand, was a finalist seven times before his breakthrough this year. It wasn't that he lacked credentials as one of the top safeties in the game for 15 seasons. The competition at the position was hefty, and Lynch, currently the general manager of the 49ers, recognizes that. "I think that is one thing that's extremely well-gratifying to see that there's been a movement, and I think a well-needed one," Lynch said. "That speaks to the value of that position because for years safeties were facing an uphill battle of getting into the hall — and I feel like I've lived it, but don't know verbatim kind of how we've started knocking down the door. But a number of safeties have done it: Brian Dawkins, Troy Polamalu, Steve Atwater. Kenny Houston at some point went in."

"The list is long here in recent years and I think that's appropriate because I think that position really has an impact on football and the reason being is because you're asked to do a little bit of everything."

The guys going into the Hall of Fame this week represent that kind of versatility. □

Forbes: NFL average team value soars to nearly \$3.5 billion

By The Associated Press

Even with a pandemic forcing empty stadiums in most franchise cities, NFL team values increased by 14% in the past year to an average of \$3.48 billion, according to Forbes.

How? New media rights deals that brought in \$111.8 billion and led to the largest value increase in five years. So even with a 20% fall in revenue and with average

operating income dropping from \$109 million in 2019 to \$7.1 million during the COVID-19 pandemic season, the 32 clubs are profiting.

Once again, the Dallas Cowboys have the highest value at \$6.5 billion. New England is next at \$5 billion, followed by the New York Giants at \$4.85 billion, the Los Angeles Rams at \$4.8 billion and Washington at

\$4.2 billion. Dallas has been on top of the evaluations for 15 straight years.

The largest one-year increase in value was for Super Bowl champion Tampa Bay, up 29%. Forbes cites Tom Brady's arrival leading to increased season-ticket and merchandise sales.

Buffalo has the lowest value, according to Forbes, at \$2.27 billion, just below Cincinnati at \$2.275 billion. □



Dallas Cowboys quarterback Ben DiNucci, right, hands off to running back Brenden Knox during the second half of the Pro Football Hall of Fame NFL preseason game against the Pittsburgh Steelers, Thursday, Aug. 5, 2021, in Canton, Ohio.

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'Four Ferraris': Italy race to shock 4x100 gold at Olympics

TOKYO (AP) — There are some things track fans are used to: Nobody stops the Jamaican women at these Olympics and the tireless Sifan Hassan is a contender for a medal in every distance race she enters.

Other things might take some getting used to: Italy is a sprint power. It now owns the gold medal in the men's 4x100-meter relay to go with the shocking 100-meter gold that Marcell Jacobs won.

The Italian relay team made Jacobs a double Olympic champion Friday, as the country pulled off a stunner to equal Jacobs' solo triumph five nights earlier. Jacobs ran the second leg of Italy's 37.5-second trip around the track, and Filippo Tortu outraced Britain's Nethaneel Mitchell-Blake to the line.

Tortu, who was slightly behind at the changeover, dipped first for a .01-second victory.

"We are four Ferraris," Tortu said.

The triumph set off a second bout of Italian sprint celebrations on the track at the Olympic Stadium — two more than anyone expected when these Games opened.

Canada, featuring 200-meter champion Andre De Grasse, took bronze in 37.70. A Jamaican Olympic squad without Usain Bolt came in fifth to end a run of three straight relay wins for the island nation. (One was stripped because of a doping case.)

Jamaica with Bolt used to



Bronze medalist Allyson Felix, of the United States, poses during the medal ceremony for the women's 400-meter run at the 2020 Summer Olympics, Friday, Aug. 6, 2021, in Tokyo.

Associated Press

be a virtual guarantee for gold. At these Olympics, a Jamaican women's team with the world's three fastest sprinters was the surest thing going.

Elaine Thompson-Herah, the double-sprint champion in Tokyo, ran the second leg after an awkward, but legal, exchange with Briana Williams. She passed the baton to Shelly-Ann Fraser Pryce, the 100 silver medalist. Fraser-Pryce connected with Shericka Jackson, the 100 bronze medalist, and Jackson took the Jamaican women home in a national-record of 41.02 seconds. It was the night's least-surprising performance — but still impressive.

It also delivered a third gold of the games for Thomp-

son-Herah, who won the 100, 200 and 4x100 relay in Bolt-like fashion.

"We got the national record, Elaine got her third gold medal, we're all going home with a gold medal, so we're just very grateful for the effort," Fraser-Pryce said.

The United States won silver in 41.45 while the U.S. men weren't in the stadium the day after a bad exchange doomed them to a sixth-place finish in their qualifying heat.

Earlier, Hassan kept her own run of medals in middle- and long-distance going with a bronze in the 1,500 meters to go with her gold at the start of the week in the 5,000. Her assignment is not over yet. She'll chase a third medal in the 10,000 fi-

nal on Saturday night. It will be her sixth race in eight days.

The Ethiopian-born runner, who competes for the Netherlands, won every one of her races in Tokyo before Friday by running at the back or near the back of the field and unleashing her speed on the final lap. But she changed those tactics in the 1,500 final by surging to the front straight away and pushing the pace hard. She couldn't hold it. Faith Kipyegon of Kenya lurked on Hassan's shoulder through the last lap and made her move on the final bend. Hassan couldn't respond.

Kipyegon went away to retain her Olympic title and set a new Olympic record of 3 minutes, 54.11 seconds.

Laura Muir of Britain also pushed ahead of Hassan to take the silver medal.

"I think the body is very tired," said Hassan, who once again draped herself in a Dutch flag after her race. She made clear her aim for the 10,000 is no longer gold, it's just a medal.

"I (just) need this," she said, holding up her bronze. "Not gold."

Likewise, Allyson Felix needed any color medal to make history on Day 8 of the track and field competition in Tokyo. The 35-year-old American got it with a bronze in the 400 meters won in a romp by Shaunae Miller-Uibo of Bahamas, who beat Marileidy Paulino of the Dominican Republic by .84 seconds.

Felix now stands alone as the most-decorated female athlete in the history of Olympic track, with 10 medals. She won No. 10 less than three years removed from a difficult pregnancy that left her wondering if she'd make it back to this point.

When it was over, she lay on her back on the track, hands covering her face but with a smile peeking through from behind them. "This one is very different, and it's very special," she said. "And it just took a lot to get here."

Also on Friday:

— Joshua Cheptegei of Uganda made his decision to come to the Olympics a highly-profitable one with a gold in the 5,000 meters to go with his silver in the 10,000. □